

CPYRGHT



M. Tofte, talking about his CIA days.

News Photos by Lou Hoffa

MR. TOFTE WAS SUSPENDED ONCE BEFORE, BUT ...

The Strange Saga of a CIA Sleuth

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By JULIAN MORRISON

Hans V. Tofte, the veteran intelligence operator suspended — with pay — by the CIA yesterday on charges he had classified documents in his Georgetown home, had been suspended by the Agency once before — 10 years ago on suspicion he might be a communist, he said.

Mr. Tofte said the Agency ordered him suspended when some officials in the CIA concluded that his employment with the Danish-controlled East Asiatic Co. in the 1930s made him suspect.

He said he joined the trading firm as a young man and spent five years in Manchuria, where he picked up three of his eight languages — Japanese, Russian and Chinese (he also speaks Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and German, in addition to English).

REASON

"It was said that since I was with the East Asiatic Co. and spoke Chinese that I was a

communist," he said yesterday.

"That is like saying Jesus Christ must be a goat because he was born in a barn," he said.

Mr. Tofte, who said he felt he had to defend not only his honor but also the reputation of the East Asiatic Co., demanded a lie detector test.

"I sat down and wrote out every nasty, incriminating question I could think of and handed them to the lie detector people. 'Here,' I said, 'ask these and any others you can think of.'"

CLEARED

He said he then spent three days under lie detector questioning, including one "horribly grueling" five-hour session, and was cleared.

At the time, he said, he was on leave from the Agency, operating his wife's family business in Mason City, Ia.,

After he was cleared, he said, he began receiving letters from

Richard Helms, now CIA director, and then a CIA official, and the late Frank G. Wisner, then a top official of the Agency, urging him to return to active CIA duty, which he did in 1957.

Mr. Tofte said that after his clearance he examined the Agency's file on the East Asiatic Co. and said, "I was appalled to find that it was at least 10 years out of date."

He said he then wrote a lengthy history of the company which included a detailed exposition of its business and of its officials, many of whom were personal friends of his.

But, he said, he decided to call for the file again about a year ago "just for the hell of it" and discovered "that someone had taken out everything I had written about it. All of it was simply gone."

"It makes one wonder what is the condition of some of the

other files they have out there," he said.

Mr. Tofte said the classified documents found in his home last week by a young CIA agent on a "house-hunting" expedition were being used in his preparation of a training manual and that many top CIA officials had long done the same thing he is accused of.

"When the security agents came for me (after finding the documents) I offered to take them to six houses (of other CIA officials who, he said, he knew had followed the same practice)." The security people did not accept his offer, he added.

"I can take you down to any book store in Washington and show you, right on the shelves, eight or nine books that have been written in the last 10 or 12 years that will teach you more about the Agency than those papers would," he said.